



## EDITORIAL

# The WPA Action Plan 2008-2011

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The activity of the WPA during the triennium of my presidency will be guided by an Action Plan, which has been approved by the WPA General Assembly during the World Congress of Psychiatry held in Prague last September. This Action Plan consists of ten institutional goals and a series of initiatives by which these goals will be pursued. I am sharing here these goals and some of the relevant initiatives with the readers of *World Psychiatry*, including now almost 33,000 psychiatrists in 121 countries.

The first institutional goal of the WPA during the triennium 2008-2011 will be to enhance the image of psychiatry worldwide among the general public, health professionals and policy makers. Unfortunately, the image of our profession is currently not very brilliant, and this has an obvious negative impact on the motivation of persons with mental disorders and their families to seek for our advice and help and to adhere to our therapeutic interventions, as well as on the motivation of medical students to choose psychiatry as a career.

The image of psychiatry as a modern medical specialty, that deals with a vast range of mental disorders, some of which are very common in the general population, and that delivers a variety of therapeutic interventions, some of which are among the most effective that medicine has at its disposal, is currently unfamiliar to the general public in most countries of the world.

On the contrary, the limitations of our diagnostic tools and our treatments often receive a great emphasis in the lay press, with messages which are frequently biased by ideological prejudice. The source of this biased information is sometimes represented by psychiatrists themselves. Antipsychiatry within psychiatry is still a reality in several countries, and our profession is unique among medical specialties in its ability to generate auto-antibodies.

We aim to pursue the goal to enhance the image of psychiatry worldwide by: a) giving visibility to successful experiences in the mental health field, through regular press releases and reports in a section of the WPA website intended for the general public; b) funding three projects on improving the public image of psychiatry, selected on the basis of an international call for proposals; c) producing a set of guidelines on how to combat stigmatization of psychiatry and psychiatrists, to be posted on the WPA website and translated in several languages; d) establishing a regular track at World and International Congresses and a special section in *World Psychiatry* focusing on successful experiences of mental health care in the various regions of the world; e) launching an international programme aiming to raise the awareness of the prevalence and prognostic impli-

cations of depression in persons with physical diseases, in collaboration with other international and national medical associations and with organizations of users and families.

Our second institutional goal will be to partner with our Member Societies in their efforts to improve the quality of mental health care, education and research in their countries and regions, and in their attempts to upgrade their own structure, governance and organizational capacity. More specifically, we will join and assist Member Societies, upon their request: a) in their interactions with national and regional institutions concerning policy matters; b) in the production and implementation of guidelines, ethical codes and research protocols; c) in promoting the refinement of curricula for graduate and post-graduate psychiatric and public mental health education; d) in the development and implementation of programmes for continuing education of psychiatrists, other mental health professionals and primary care practitioners; e) in refining their structure and organization. We will produce a template for graduate and post-graduate psychiatric education to be posted on the WPA website and translated in several languages. We will organize a series of seminars at World and International Congresses in which leaders of selected Member Societies will illustrate the structure and activities of their associations to representatives of other Member Societies, answer their questions and provide advice on specific issues.

Our third institutional goal will be to promote the dissemination of information on recent clinical, service and research developments in such a way that it can be assimilated by psychiatrists of all regions of the world, including those who are not able to read English. This goal will be pursued by: a) the implementation of high-quality itinerant educational workshops, to be replicated in the four WPA Regions (the Americas, Europe, Africa and the Middle East, Asia/Australasia); b) the development of a CME online programme; c) the production of a series of guidelines on issues of great practical relevance, translated into several languages; d) an increased dissemination of *World Psychiatry* and the promotion of the translation of entire issues or selected articles in several languages, making them available on the WPA website and on the websites of relevant Member Societies; e) activities aimed to support the development of selected national psychiatric journals.

Our fourth institutional goal will be to promote the professional development of young psychiatrists worldwide. This goal will be pursued by: a) launching, in collaboration with a network of centers of excellence, a programme of one-year fellowships for young psychiatrists from low-income countries, who will commit themselves to apply in their country





of origin what they have learnt; b) organizing a series of workshops on leadership and professional skills for young psychiatrists; c) facilitating the participation of young psychiatrists in WPA Congresses and other worthwhile scientific meetings; d) stimulating the participation of young psychiatrists in the activities of WPA Scientific Sections; e) joining and assisting Member Societies in the development and implementation of programmes for young psychiatrists.

Our fifth institutional goal will be to contribute to the integration of mental health care into primary care in low-income countries. We will develop a “training the trainers” programme, targeting nurses and clinical officers working in dispensaries and health centers, to be implemented in selected low-income countries, among which the first will be Nigeria.

Our sixth institutional goal will be to foster the participation of psychiatrists from all regions of the world in the international dialogue on clinical, service and research issues, by ensuring an adequate representation of colleagues from all regions in WPA programmes, scientific meetings and publications, and in the activities of WPA Scientific Sections.

Our seventh institutional goal will be to promote the highest ethical standards in psychiatric practice and to advocate for the rights of persons with mental disorders in all regions of the world. This goal will be pursued by: a) launching an international programme on the protection and promotion of physical health in persons with severe mental disorders, in collaboration with other international and national medical associations and with organizations of users

and families; b) supporting international and national programmes aiming to protect the human rights of persons with mental disorders; to promote the meaningful involvement of these persons in the planning and implementation of mental health services; to encourage the assessment and development of these persons’ talents, strengths and aspirations; and to promote equity in the access to mental health services for persons of different age, gender, race/ethnicity, religion and socioeconomic status.

Our eighth institutional goal will be to promote the establishment of networks of scientists conducting collaborative research in the mental health field. We will fund at least two high-quality international research projects conducted by WPA Scientific Sections, and will facilitate the involvement of the most prominent scientists in the activities of these Sections.

Our ninth institutional goal will be to increase the visibility and credibility of the WPA, by ensuring that the initiatives and products of the Association are of the highest possible quality level, with a fully effective utilization of available human resources.

Our tenth institutional goal will be to build up a long-term, solid and transparent partnership with potential donors. A consortium of donors has been created, which will partially fund the above-mentioned activities.

Readers of *World Psychiatry* who are interested to be informed or wish to contribute to the above initiatives are welcome to contact the WPA Secretariat ([wpasecretariat@wpanet.org](mailto:wpasecretariat@wpanet.org)).